UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

ACC

Administrative Committee on Coordination

ACC/1997/2
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ENGLISH ONLY

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITTEE AT ITS FIRST REGULAR SESSION (PARTS I AND II)

PART I

(Geneva, 20 to 22 and 24 March 1997)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Organizational Committee (OC) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) met at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 20 to 22 and on 24 March 1997. OC amended and adopted an annotated agenda for the meeting, which is contained in annex I. The list of participants is contained in annex II. The outcome of a further meeting of OC, held immediately after the first regular session of 1997 of ACC, is reflected in part II of the present summary of conclusions. The list of participants for that further meeting (14 April 1997) is contained in annex IV.

I. PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF ACC

A. Review of developments affecting international cooperation and development, and their implications for the United Nations system

1. Strengthening and reform of the United Nations system

2. OC, recognizing the priority attention being given to the issue of the strengthening and reform of the United Nations system, confirmed that the topic should be one of the interrelated themes for discussion by ACC under this agenda item.

3. The Chairman of OC briefed the Committee on developments since the issuance of the first ACC statement on reform. The ACC statement, while raising a number of important reform issues, had not had a wide-ranging impact, one of the reasons being the continuing and rapid developments that were taking place in the system in the area of reform. The view was expressed that the statement nevertheless provided a sound policy and programmatic basis for addressing further and in greater detail reform issues in the future.

4. The Chairman also briefed OC on the initial set of reform measures that had been introduced by the Secretary-General within the Organization (track 1), and outlined the way in which the Secretary-General approached the formulation of a

broader package of reform proposals (track 2) to be submitted to the General Assembly later in the year. The first set of reform measures related to managerial initiatives and other decisions that fell within the Secretary-General's authority. OC members expressed appreciation for the transparent process initiated by the Secretary-General, particularly his initiative to share the reform proposals with executive heads before their announcement, and expressed the hope that this would contribute to a new and more transparent management culture within the system. OC members indicated that their executive heads looked forward to a similar approach being followed in pursuing consultations in relation to further phases of the process. It was understood that the matter would be discussed at the private meeting during the ACC session.

5. OC suggested that further consideration should be given to ways of promoting a continuous information exchange on reform issues, possibly organized on the basis of the four sectors identified by the Secretary-General in the first phase of United Nations reform. It was suggested that, to the extent possible, electronic means should be utilized for this purpose.

6. The Chairman of the Committee recalled that work had been initiated, with the involvement of the jointly financed secretariats of the ACC Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), for the preparation of a report on system-wide reform measures, and explained the reasons why it had not as yet proved feasible to complete and issue it, as originally planned. He suggested that this work should be resumed, with a view to issuing the publication during the next session of the General Assembly, so that it could take into account recent important developments in many organizations, including the Secretary-General's track 2 reform proposals.

7. OC exchanged information and views on reform-related developments in the organizations of the United Nations system, and noted that important initiatives had been and continued to be taken throughout the system by the executive heads, in cooperation with governing bodies in their respective organizations, to enhance efficiency, cost-effectiveness and relevance to the needs and expectations of member States. OC considered that ACC's discussions on reform should endeavour to identify and focus on the reform measures on which there was the greatest convergence, so as to bring about greater synergy and strengthen the collective impact of those measures on improving the overall functioning of the system. OC also stressed that United Nations organizations and agencies should develop capacities for evaluating reform measures, in order to ensure that their results led to real improvements in the delivery of services to member States. Other observations made during the discussions included the following:

(a) Approaches to United Nations reform should avoid over-centralization, at a time when decentralization was among the guiding concepts of the reforms under way in the private and governmental sectors;

(b) The ACC machinery should address issues in relation to which there were interfaces among the organizations of the system, in other words, grey

areas that did not fall under the mandate of any single organization and where joint action was required;

(c) There was a need to refine the definitions of normative and operational activities and the linkages between them;

(d) A "track 3" might eventually be necessary: governmental structures and United Nations system structures tended to mirror each other; the overall reform effort would have the desired impact to the extent that United Nations system reform was followed by reform at the level of Governments.

8. Drawing on its discussions on this topic, OC prepared annotations for the ACC's consideration of agenda item 2 (a), on review of developments affecting international cooperation and development and their implications for the United Nations system, for which the topic of the strengthening and reform of the United Nations had been selected as one of the themes.

2. Peace-building

9. In preparing for the ACC's discussion on this issue, which was the second main theme under item 2 in the ACC agenda, OC had before it a note by the United Nations, as well as the outcome of the consideration by CCPOQ of the role of the United Nations system in post-conflict recovery.

10. OC endorsed the view put forth in the United Nations note that not only did the concept of peace-building apply to post-conflict situations, but it needed also to be extended to activities aimed at preventing conflicts and to support measures during a conflict that would facilitate the peace process. It considered that more emphasis needed to be placed on "early warning", in order to prevent crisis situations from developing.

11. OC also shared the view of CCPOQ that the existing gaps between relief and development programmes had to be overcome and that the establishment of a flexible and pragmatic strategic framework for response to and recovery from crisis was essential to this end. Such a strategic approach, if it was to be effective in crisis response and recovery, should engage all partners in the United Nations system in accordance with their mandates, as well as national authorities, donor organizations and non-governmental organizations.

12. In the light of the above discussions, OC drew up annotations for the ACC agenda to help structure the ACC's consideration of this theme.

B. Follow-up, within the system, to ACC's initiatives and decisions

1. Coordinated follow-up to international conferences

13. OC had before it a background note containing an interim report on inter-agency activities and other developments relevant to the follow-up to global conferences. This was supplemented by oral updates on the work of the

three ad hoc task forces by OC representatives of the lead organizations of these task forces. OC welcomed the recommendation of CCPOQ to organize a workshop, possibly in early September of this year, to develop proposals, for submission through CCPOQ to ACC at its second regular session of 1997, on future collaborative action relevant to the follow-up to recent international conferences.

14. OC recalled that the existing task forces were time-bound in nature, and reiterated its understanding that they would be disbanded upon the completion of their work and the submission of their reports to ACC. While the need for new ad hoc task forces could not, and should not, be excluded, existing mechanisms within the standing machinery of ACC such as CCPOQ and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), were well placed to monitor the utilization, particularly at the field level, of the end products produced by the existing task forces.

15. OC proposed that ACC approve the recommendation of CCPOQ that the arrangements set forth by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to replace the former Subcommittee on Rural Development should be designated as the mechanism for inter-agency follow-up to the World Food Summit. Under these arrangements, thematic groups covering food security and related issues would be constituted at the country level, within the resident coordinator system. At the headquarters level, FAO would assume responsibility for the overall operation of a network of interested organizations, including also non-United Nations actors, to backstop these country-level groups and promote common approaches. IFAD would manage a monitoring and evaluation component, inter alia, to collect, analyse and disseminate selected country experiences. Reporting to ACC would occur, as appropriate, through CCPOQ and/or through IACSD. Relevant outputs would also be made available to other mechanisms within or outside the ACC machinery.

16. OC noted the keen interest of member States in the work of the existing task forces. It urged that the report on the subject to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council should highlight the concrete results being achieved through system-wide collaboration, as well as the intention of ACC to continue giving priority attention to supporting the results of recent global conferences, with the placing of special emphasis on country-level action.

17. In this connection, the organization of a panel discussion at the Economic and Social Council with the participation of representatives from the lead agencies of the three task forces, the chair of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE), and representatives from the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and FAO was supported as a useful means of deriving advantages from, and as the kind of interactive discussion with member States that would demonstrate clearly the valuable lessons learned from, the cooperative approaches introduced by ACC within the framework of the follow-up to international conferences.

18. OC also considered that both CCPOQ and IACSD should give attention to determining the best means of sustaining an effective utilization, particularly at the country level, of the end products of the task forces.

19. In light of the information provided in the background note and of the supplementary information provided by the lead organizations of the three ad hoc task forces, OC drew up annotations for the ACC agenda to help structure ACC consideration of this item.

2. United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa

20. Two background notes on the item were introduced by a representative of the secretariat of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. The first covered the contribution of the Special Initiative to the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN/NADAF),[1] and the second focused on progress in the implementation of the Special Initiative itself.

21. OC considered that the matrix linking the priorities of UN/NADAF and the recommendations of the mid-term review of UN/NADAF with the priority areas of the Special Initiative was useful in demonstrating the contribution of the Special Initiative to the effective implementation of UN/NADAF. The hope was expressed that the identification of these linkages would also help streamline or merge reporting requirements in relation to both UN/NADAF and the Special Initiative.

22. OC made a number of suggestions to improve the matrix, including the introduction of double entries into the matrix to ensure a more comprehensive coverage of activities, and hoped that these suggestions would be pursued by the Steering Committee of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa at its next meeting immediately prior to the ACC session. It was understood that the matrix would be further refined.

23. OC recalled that the Special Initiative needed to be seen in the broader context of all other ongoing activities contributing to African development, and underscored the importance of strengthening linkages between the Special Initiative and other United Nations system-wide efforts, including ongoing inter-agency activities related to the follow-up to major conferences, as well as other relevant initiatives of individual organizations. ACC expressed the hope that, in reporting to ACC on the achievements of the Special Initiative to date and on the future directions of this work, the Steering Committee would give special attention to ways of promoting specific results, and would identify clear benchmarks for monitoring future progress, focusing on concrete country-level impact.

24. Given the need to maintain the momentum for the Special Initiative at this early phase of implementation, OC suggested that this item continue, at least for the immediate future, to feature in the agenda of ACC.

25. In light of the above discussions, and the information provided by the secretariat of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa on

the outcome of the meeting of the technical working group held in Addis Ababa on 6 and 7 March, OC drew up annotations for the ACC agenda to help structure the Committee's consideration of this item.

3. Universal access to basic communication and information services

26. The representative of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) introduced the report on the outcome of this inter-agency project. OC commended ITU for its leadership of the project and highlighted two important results of the initiative. The first was the establishment of the fact that it had now become essential to consider the extent to which rapid technological advances triggered the emergence of a right to communicate. The second was the highlighting of the promotion of universal access to basic communication and information services as a priority objective of the United Nations system, with such access contributing to achieving the overarching goal of securing sustainable development for all.

27. Another important feature of the outcome of the project was to reinforce the common intention of the organizations of the United Nations system to harmonize and coordinate their strategies for modernizing and enhancing capacities and effectiveness in this area. In this context, OC expressed strong support for the proposal to create a United Nations system-wide Intranet (Internet for internal use), as a means to facilitate an effective integration of the competencies of all concerned United Nations organizations in support of country-level action. In the same context, OC members shared the view that there was an urgent need for a strategic and systematic approach to information and communication technologies (ICT) and information management that would ensure compatibility, accessibility and convergence of communications and computer-based systems among the organizations of the system. The Committee agreed that the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC) should ensure follow-up within the system to those recommendations of the project coming within its purview.

28. In the light of its discussions, OC drew up annotations for the ACC agenda to help prepare for the ACC's consideration of this item, and recommended the adoption by ACC of a statement on universal access to basis communication and information services.

4. Graça Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children

29. The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) introduced the background note prepared by his organization on the Graça Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children, and the actions taken on the study at the last session of the General Assembly.

30. OC noted that the study, which was the result of a wide process of consultation over a two-year period, was the most comprehensive human rights appraisal of children affected by armed conflict ever debated by Member States

in the General Assembly. OC's discussions focused on ways in which the organizations of the system could assist, within their respective mandates, in the effective and timely implementation of the study's recommendations, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 51/77 (II).

31. OC's discussion on the issue, including the formulation of draft recommendations for the consideration of ACC, is reflected in the relevant annotations to the ACC agenda.

C. Other matters

1. Functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery

32. Recognizing that questions relating to the functioning of ACC itself and secretariat support for the ACC machinery were directly relevant to the overall questions of system-wide reform, OC decided to include some observations and recommendations on the functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery in the annotations for the ACC's discussion of agenda item 2.1 on "Strengthening and reform of the United Nations system".

2. Administrative questions

33. OC recalled that ACC, at its second regular session of 1996, had requested the United Nations to invite the General Assembly, on behalf of ACC, to institute an independent review, to be carried out in 1997 by a group of auditors-general or former auditors-general of selected member States, of the role and functions of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), focusing on the relevance, effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the JIU studies, and resulting in recommendations to the Assembly on the future role of JIU, the optimal resources needed to fulfil that role, and the opportunities provided by outsourcing studies. The consultations on the subject, to be carried out by the United Nations with the President of the Assembly, were also to include the feasibility of postponing elections to fill vacancies in the membership of JIU due to take place at the fifty-first session of the Assembly, as a cost-containment measure.

34. OC was informed by its Chairman that the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management had met with the President of the General Assembly to convey the ACC recommendations, but that the Assembly itself had not yet considered the matter. While a postponement of the elections due this year did not appear any longer feasible, the proposal for an independent review was still on the table and it was expected that the Assembly would take up the matter at a resumed session during the course of the year.

35. OC's preparations for the consideration of this item by ACC were also based on the outcome of the eighty-sixth session of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) (CCAQ(FB)) held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, from 10 to 14 February 1997.

36. Regarding the issue of the budgets of jointly financed bodies for 1998-1999, OC noted that, while the proposed programme budgets of the three jointly financed bodies of the ACC machinery (CCAQ, CCPOQ and ISCC) were within the resource target levels as recommended to ACC and had, as such, been approved by CCAQ(FB) on behalf of ACC, the proposed budgets of JIU and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) were in excess of the zero real growth resource target levels. Furthermore, the review of the work of the ICSC secretariat, called for in General Assembly resolution 51/216 (VIII), had not yet been undertaken, nor had the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions) (CCAQ(PER)) and ICSC itself reviewed the budget proposals. These factors had further constrained the ability of CCAQ(FB) to complete a comprehensive review of the ICSC budget proposals.

37. On the basis of the above-mentioned report and its discussions, OC prepared annotations to the ACC agenda.

38. OC also noted that, in accordance with established practice, ACC would hear statements from, and have an exchange of views with, the representatives of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA). The Chairman of OC indicated that he was in contact with the representatives of these bodies regarding their participation. In the case of ICSC, he noted that the Commission had not met since the last session of ACC and that for this reason, as well as owing to personnel constraints, its Chairman would not be available to participate in the ACC session.

3. Inauguration of the United Nations Staff College project

39. OC was briefed on the status of the United Nations Staff College project, its objectives and proposed institutional framework, and was informed of arrangements for its inauguration, in which ACC members were invited to participate, by the Secretary-General on 12 April. Such participation was intended to highlight and reinforce the system-wide character of the project.

4. Other issues

40. OC arranged for relevant aspects of the reports of CCPOQ (document ACC/1997/7), of IACSD (document ACC/1997/1), of CCAQ(FB) (document ACC/1997/5), and of IACWGE (documents ACC/1996/22 and ACC/1997/8) to be drawn to the attention of ACC, as relevant, under the appropriate agenda items.

41. Meetings of ACC subsidiary bodies proposed to be held before the next session of ACC are as follows:

IACSD	Geneva (hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO))	Week of 15 September 1997
CCPOQ	New York	22 to 26 September 1997
CCAQ(FB)	New York	25 to 29 August 1997

II. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND CIVIL SOCIETY

42. The representative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) introduced the background paper he had prepared on the issue at the Committee's request. The paper was well received by OC members, who considered that it provided a good conceptual basis for further inter-agency consideration of the topic.

43. OC recommended that the issue of the relationship between the United Nations system and civil society should be a main theme in the agenda of the second regular session of ACC for 1997, as it was a very topical subject and in addition encompassed a significant dimension of United Nations system reform. The documentation for ACC should encompass both normative and operational aspects and include information on agency collaboration with civil society as well as examples of best practices with a clear indication, whenever possible, of the value gained.

44. Regarding the definition of civil society, OC considered that a broad definition, encompassing the whole range of non-State actors, including the private sector, should be used in preparing for the ACC discussion.

45. It was suggested that an informal meeting of interested OC members be convened in Geneva at the time of the upcoming first regular session of ACC in order to advance preparations for the ACC discussions at the second regular session, and to ascertain what further information on individual institutional experience might be required. In addition, further informal discussions should also be held during the occasion of the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva. The ILO representative was invited to continue to take the lead in the preparation of the documentation to be submitted to ACC.

46. It was decided that all member organizations of ACC, as well as the main consultative committees of ACC (CCPOQ, IACSD, IACWGE), should be requested to provide inputs into the study. CCPOQ could, in particular, contribute to the identification of best practices within the system. In this context reference was made to an upcoming Geneva consultation, to be organized by the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) in April.

III. WORK OF ACC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND OTHER INTER-AGENCY BODIES

A. Work of ACC consultative committees

47. In the exercise of its functions in respect of preparing the ACC session, as well as of assisting ACC and/or acting on its behalf in monitoring the overall functioning of the ACC machinery, OC considered and took note of the following reports of ACC bodies: CCAQ(FB), IACSD, CCPOQ and IACWGE.

1. Report of the eighty-sixth session of CCAQ(FB) (ACC/1997/5), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna, 10 to 14 February 1997

48. The Secretary of CCAQ(FB) briefed OC on the work of the eighty-sixth session of the Committee held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, from 10 to 14 February 1997.

49. OC shared the concerns of CCAQ(FB) concerning current budgetary pressures, and noted that the improvements in collections of assessed contributions registered at the end of December 1996, as compared with the situation that had prevailed at the end of December 1995, were expected to provide only a temporary respite. Non-payment and/or delayed payment of assessed contributions continued to pose very serious problems for the system. While improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness continued to be a high priority for managers of financial administration and support services, there was concern in CCAQ(FB) that further reductions of administrative costs might result in damage to the integrity of financial control systems.

50. With regard to the programme budget proposals of the jointly financed bodies, OC noted that CCAQ(FB) had approved, on behalf of ACC, the budget proposals for 1998-1999 of CCAQ, CCPOQ and ISCC, and welcomed the fact that the secretariats of these bodies had submitted budgets that incorporated real reductions and were within the target budget levels as recommended to ACC by CCAQ(FB) at its August 1996 session.

51. OC noted that the budget proposal for ICSC for 1998-1999 had been reviewed by CCAQ(FB) which had recommended certain reductions. OC also noted the concern expressed by CCAQ(FB) that a proposed ICSC meeting in a field location would most likely involve extra costs for the ICSC secretariat as well as for participants from member organizations. OC further noted with concern that there appeared to have been little progress so far with the review of the work of ICSC called for in General Assembly resolution 51/216, and urged that the review be concluded as speedily as possible.

52. With regard to the budget proposals for JIU, OC recalled that ACC's request, at its second regular session of 1996, that the President of the General Assembly be approached by the United Nations, on the Committee's behalf, with regard to the feasibility of postponing the elections to fill the five forthcoming vacancies in JIU (see paras. 33 and 34 above) had been conceived as a cost-containment measure, pending the outcome of an independent review of the role and functioning of JIU. OC also shared CCAQ(FB)'s concern that the JIU budget proposals, in addition to providing for the full complement of Inspector posts throughout 1998-1999, also provided for one additional Professional level post in the JIU secretariat. OC noted that the JIU budget proposal was well in excess of the budget target level recommended to ACC by CCAQ(FB) as well as in excess of the indicative amount set by the United Nations in January 1997.

53. OC concurred with the adjustments to the budget proposals for ICSC and JIU recommended in paragraphs 16 and 20 of the report of CCAQ(FB) on its session. OC recalled that, under the statutes of ICSC and JIU, the budget estimates for

these bodies for submission to the General Assembly were to be drawn up by the Secretary-General after consultation with ACC. Thus, in endorsing the recommended adjustments to these budgets, OC expressed the hope that they would be fully reflected in the budget estimates to be submitted by the United Nations to the Assembly.

54. One organization informed the Committee that it intended to reduce the amounts it contributed to jointly financed activities in its budget proposals for 1998-1999. In this connection, it was recalled that all organizations were bound by the terms of the statutes of JIU and ICSC which stated that an organization could not withdraw its acceptance of the statute until it had given the Secretary-General two years' notice of its intention to do so. It was further recalled that the statutes provided that the expenditures of JIU and ICSC should be shared by the organizations in a manner to be agreed by them, and that there were long-standing agreements regarding cost-sharing arrangements for the jointly financed activities that had been approved by CCAQ(FB) on behalf of ACC.

2. Report of the ninth meeting of IACSD (ACC/1997/1), United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 and 21 February 1997

55. The Secretary of IACSD briefed OC on the work of the ninth meeting of IACSD. OC noted that the meeting had focused on the preparations for the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, with particular emphasis on issues relating to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly. In this connection, OC welcomed the fact that IACSD had finalized a draft of the ACC statement to be addressed to the Assembly at its 1997 special session, and noted that the draft was being cleared by ACC members by correspondence.

56. Regarding the participation of agencies and organizations of the United Nations system in the special session of the General Assembly, OC noted that arrangements were being made by the President of the Assembly for a number of statements from United Nations bodies and organizations to be included in the formal deliberations of the Plenary of the special session, on the basis of the following two criteria, namely (a) that the organization was either a task manager for one of the chapters of Agenda 21[2] or one of the international financial institutions of the United Nations system and (b) that the statement would be delivered at the level of the executive head of the organization. In addition to delivering statements in the Plenary, United Nations bodies and organizations would have other opportunities to participate in the special session, including in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole and in the organization of side events. Given the importance of the special session for future work on Agenda 21 at the global and intergovernmental levels, as well as its implications for the work programmes of United Nations bodies and organizations, OC considered that organizations should be encouraged to participate in the work of the special session at the senior-most level.

3. Report of CCPOQ on its tenth session (ACC/1997/7), Palais des Nations, Geneva, 3-7 March 1997

57. The Secretary of CCPOQ drew the attention of OC to those aspects of the Committee's work and recommendations that had been brought to the attention of ACC. They related to the United Nations system's response to post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction, the coordinated follow-up to the international conferences, and the contribution of CCPOQ to the review of the ACC subsidiary machinery. He noted in particular that a very comprehensive process had been followed in developing the proposals on responses to crisis situations, which had included reviews by CCPOQ at its ninth and tenth sessions, two consultancy analyses based on extensive consultations within the United Nations system and with external partners, technical preparation by a working group, and close interaction with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

58. With regard to other items in CCPOQ's agenda, the Secretary made particular reference to the extensive work being undertaken in the field of operational activities for development, notably in regard to the improved functioning of the resident coordinator system. He also referred to the satisfactory conclusion of the efforts to co-locate the CCAQ and CCPOQ secretariats at the Palais des Nations in Geneva; and to the future participation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in CCPOQ.

59. OC members expressed appreciation for the report and recommendations of CCPOQ. It was generally felt that CCPOQ's recent work reflected definite progress in responding to the recommendations of ACC concerning the need for a better balance in the Committee's work programme between programme coordination issues and operational activities, as well as in selecting topics for its agenda, and preparing inter-agency and intergovernmental discussions that addressed issues of central policy concern. It was hoped that CCPOQ, in pursuing such work, would particularly focus on linkages between normative and operational issues, draw on the experience of the ACC task forces and make flexible use of the task manager approach.

60. OC noted the proposals developed by CCPOQ on arrangements to pursue inter-agency work relating to the coordinated follow-up to international conferences, including the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the World Food Summit (see also in this connection para. 14 above). It noted, in particular, the proposed successor arrangements for the work of the former ACC Subcommittee on Rural Development, at both the field and the headquarters level, and their intended use in the follow-up to the World Food Summit.

61. On behalf of ACC, OC invited CCPOQ to finalize the revision of the ACC programme classification, in time for its introduction, after clearance by CCAQ(FB), and endorsement by ACC, as of the biennium 1998-1999.

62. OC noted the recommendation of CCPOQ that a mechanism for inter-agency consultations on modalities for operational cooperation with non-governmental organizations be located in NGLS, and that this recommendation would be referred to the NGLS sponsors group and to the Joint United Nations Information Committee

(JUNIC), prior to its consideration by OC and submission to ACC at its second regular session of 1997.

4. Reports of IACWGE on its first and second sessions (ACC/1996/22 and ACC/1997/8), United Nations Headquarters, New York, 22 and 23 October 1996, and 5 and 6 March 1997

63. With regard to the reports of IACWGE on its first and second sessions, OC noted the steps taken by the Committee to organize its work. Considering that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system was being proposed as a main theme for discussion at a session of ACC in 1998, as a central concern of all ACC members, OC suggested that the Committee give due priority in the months ahead to preparing a draft advocacy statement on the subject for adoption by ACC.

B. Reports of bodies reporting to OC

Report of ISCC on its fourth session (ACC/1996/18), Palais des Nations, Geneva, 7-9 October 1996

64. The report of ISCC on its fourth session was introduced by the Secretary of the Committee. The report contained a number of recommendations for the attention of OC, relating to:

(a) Information systems technology and services;

(b) Wider accessibility of information;

(c) Terms of reference of ISCC;

(d) Appointment of the Secretary of the Committee;

(e) Proposed agenda, dates and venue for the fifth session of the Committee;

(f) Location of the ISCC secretariat.

65. OC considered that ISCC was undertaking excellent work in an area of growing importance to the United Nations system. While recognizing that much progress had been achieved, and that harmonization would have financial implications for all parts of the system, OC members expressed strong reservations about different aspects of the funding mechanism proposed by ISCC for information systems technology and services, and considered that the proposal would require careful review before further action could be taken. The Committee thus requested ISCC to provide clarification on the proposal, and decided to revert to it at a subsequent session, prior to seeking the views of CCAQ(FB), if necessary.

66. OC commended the United Nations Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System (UNCAPS) as a valuable product for the system. It also considered that the proposed inter-agency Intranet should be pursued by the Committee, in connection with the follow-up to paragraph 17 of the draft statement of the Inter-Agency Project on Universal Access to Basic Communication and Information Services. In general, the need for harmonized and more compatible computer systems throughout United Nations organizations was recognized, and ISCC was encouraged to explore options and to make further recommendations in this regard.

67. With respect to wider accessibility of information, ISCC's focus on the expanded use of the Internet was endorsed. OC, on behalf of ACC, also endorsed the Model Policy Statement on Publishing and Disseminating Information in an Electronic Age (see annex III for full text), and urged that the policy be adapted by each individual agency to its own requirements, and pursued by each as one element of a more harmonized approach to the presentation to the world community of United Nations system information by electronic means. The ISCC proposals for its 1998-1999 proposed work programme on information infrastructure, improvement of access to information and modernization of dissemination of information were generally supported, as were the working methods adopted by the Committee, including the increased use of videoconferencing.

68. It was noted that, in implementing the database of Information Systems Applications of United Nations Organizations (UNAPPS), ISCC had fulfilled an important responsibility connected with one element of its terms of reference: that of providing an electronic repository on information system development within the United Nations system.

69. The recommendation of ISCC that its current Secretary, Mr. John Northcut, be appointed for a second term was endorsed by OC. At the same time, OC expressed serious reservations with regard to the proposed temporary relocation of the ISCC secretariat from Geneva to New York, bearing in mind the importance attached by ACC to having the jointly financed secretariats of its subsidiary bodies co-located in Geneva. OC requested further information on the rationale for such a temporary relocation, and agreed to revert to this issue at the second part of its session.

70. OC also considered under this item a proposal by the International Computing Centre (ICC) to present a briefing on information technology to ACC at its first regular session. Noting that inclusion of a similar briefing in a United Nations Staff College project on management training was intended, OC preferred to await the results of this initiative before formulating a recommendation to ACC. The earliest occasion for such a briefing to ACC would thus be the 1997 fall session of ACC.

IV. OTHER MATTERS

Future sessions of OC and ACC

71. Consideration of this item was postponed to part II of the OC session.

PART II

(Geneva, 14 April 1997)

INTRODUCTION

72. OC met on 14 April 1997 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, to consider the follow-up to the decisions taken and conclusions reached by ACC at its first regular session of 1997 on 10 and 11 April 1997 (see ACC/1997/4), and to conclude the consideration of a number of issues included in the agenda of the first part of its session.

73. The list of participants is contained in annex IV.

Peace-building

74. OC pursued the discussions on this item that it had initiated during part I of its current session. OC expressed broad support for the proposals of CCPOQ relating to the principle of a strategic approach for response to, and recovery from, crisis; establishment of early warning arrangements; and the establishment of a working group to facilitate all aspects of the application of the approach. OC nevertheless stressed that:

(a) Adequate involvement and consultation with national authorities should be ensured;

(b) A clear distinction between what would be done at the country level and what would be done at the headquarters level should be clarified;

(c) ACC subsidiary machinery including CCPOQ, in participating in this work, should not have an operational role that would conflict with the roles of member organizations;

(d) Care should be taken to ensure that the CCPOQ proposal did not result in the creation of additional machinery. Rather, the use of existing machinery and mechanisms should be fully explored;

(e) The integration of United Nations system support for humanitarian and development requirements should reduce, and not increase, inter-agency arrangements.

I. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND CIVIL SOCIETY

75. Since it had not been possible to convene a meeting of interested OC members during the first regular session of ACC as originally envisaged, OC agreed that an informal meeting of OC should be held in Geneva during the first part of the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council to consider the matter further. The Chairman of OC was requested to determine the

most appropriate date for the meeting after consultations with members of the Committee.

II. WORK OF ACC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND OTHER INTER-AGENCY BODIES

Reports of bodies reporting to OC

Report of ISCC on its fourth session

76. OC, in light of the decision of ACC that the secretariats of the jointly financed bodies of its subsidiary machinery should be co-located in Geneva, concluded that the ISCC secretariat should remain in Geneva.

III. OTHER MATTERS

A. Future sessions of OC and ACC

77. ACC had decided that its second regular session of 1997 would be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 31 October and 1 November 1997. With regard to the dates of the next OC session in New York, the middle of the first week of October 1997 was tentatively identified, taking into account, inter alia, the timing of the meeting of IACSD and the session of CCPOQ which had been scheduled for the second half of September, and conflicting schedules of some members of OC during the early part of October. The view was reiterated that the dates of future meetings of OC should be set to provide adequate preparatory time for the sessions of ACC, including the recognition of the need for appropriate briefings of executive heads before the meetings of ACC.

B. Functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery

78. Members of OC expressed the view that the Committee would need to assess its own functioning and methods of work, particularly with regard to the length and timing of its sessions, the preparation of documentation and the drafting and approval of its reports. It was therefore agreed that OC would review these issues at its next session.

Notes

[1] General Assembly resolution 46/151, annex, sect. II.

[2] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

Annex I

ANNOTATED AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Preparations for the first regular session of ACC

1. In the context of its review of the functioning of the ACC machinery, ACC, at its first regular session of 1996, concluded that it should "strengthen its capacity to develop common assessments of the environment in which international cooperation and development were taking place and of the resource outlooks; of emerging developments among key constituencies and Governments; and of the expectations of member Governments and the public for the efficient and effective delivery of services, particularly at the country level, including linkages between bilateral and multilateral assistance and between emergency, post-emergency and development assistance" (ACC/1996/4, para. 41).

2. In preparing annotations for this agenda item, OC may wish to provide for an initial exchange of views by executive heads on recent developments affecting the environment for international cooperation and development, and make suggestions, in the light of the above ACC conclusion, on how such an exchange might best be organized.

(a) Review of developments affecting international cooperation and development, and their implications for the United Nations system: peacekeeping, rehabilitation and development

(i) Strengthening and reform of the United Nations system

3. OC, recognizing the priority attention being given to the issue of strengthening and reform of the United Nations system, considered that the topic should be one of the interrelated themes for discussion under this agenda item.

4. It will be recalled that, at its last session (second regular session of 1996), ACC carried out a wide-ranging review of the direction of ongoing reform processes in the United Nations system and their implications for the strengthening of the system.

5. ACC decided to issue a joint statement on the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system (ACC/1996/20, annex I), the text of which was issued in document SG/SM/6106. It was further decided that a synthesis report on developments in reform processes within the United Nations system should be prepared and updated from time to time.

6. Following the session, inputs from organizations were requested, and the cooperation of the jointly financed secretariats was enlisted, for the preparation of the first synthesis report. OC will be updated on progress in the preparation of such a report. In the same context, OC may wish to formulate recommendations on the way in which discussions on reform issues might be pursued in ACC at its forthcoming session, as well as at future sessions. It

should be recalled, in this context, that "ACC agreed to focus its future work programme on priority issues on the global agenda that had implications for system-wide coordination and cooperation and could serve to advance the substantive goals of the reform process, as outlined in its joint statement" (ACC/1996/20, para. 10).

(ii) Peace-building

7. With regard to the other specific theme to be considered under this item, in accordance with the ACC decision that it should, at each session, take up "one or two broad themes of central concern to the system" (ACC/1996/4, para. 42), it will be recalled that a theme relating to "the strengthening of inter-agency coordination in situations where peacemaking or peacekeeping are to proceed in parallel with emergency relief, reconstruction and the resumption of economic and social development"* had originally been identified for discussion at the second regular session of ACC for 1996, and subsequently remitted for consideration to the first regular session for 1997.

8. A note on this theme is currently being prepared for submission to ACC, taking into account, inter alia, relevant issues currently under consideration in CCPOQ. The note will endeavour to define a heading and the parameters for this theme, as well as to identify specific policy issues on which discussions of executive heads might most profitably be focused. The note will be available at the time of the session of OC.

(b) Follow-up, within the system, to ACC's initiatives and decisions

(i) Coordinated follow-up to international conferences

9. At the second regular session of ACC of 1995, executive heads reiterated that monitoring the follow-up by the United Nations system to recent global conferences would remain a main concern of ACC in the period ahead. In order to contribute to a coordinated and integrated follow-up, ACC decided that, in the future, it would review the implementation of the results of recent global conferences on the basis of a thematic approach, drawing on the work of its standing machinery and other relevant inter-agency mechanisms. At the same session, ACC decided to establish three ad hoc inter-agency task forces to provide integrated support to follow-up action at the country level, around three interrelated themes:

(a) The enabling environment for social and economic development;

(b) Employment and sustainable livelihoods;

(c) Basic social services for all.

10. At its two regular sessions of 1996, ACC reviewed the work being undertaken by these task forces, including related actions being taken at the national and international levels, and formulated recommendations to guide their further activities (ACC/1996/4, paras. 23-37 and ACC/1996/20, paras. 11-24). At its second regular session of 1996, ACC decided to undertake, at its first regular session of 1997, a first comprehensive assessment of overall progress within the

system in promoting the coordinated follow-up to recent global conferences, including the effectiveness of the new inter-agency mechanisms that it had established for that purpose, and to consider further arrangements to be made to pursue such work within the inter-agency machinery.

11. It now appears that not all of the task forces will have concluded their work by the time of the OC/ACC first regular sessions, and it may therefore be necessary for ACC to pursue and finalize this assessment at its October 1997 session. In so doing, ACC will also be in a position to take into account the outcome of the consideration of issues relating to the work of these task forces at the coordination segment of the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council in July 1997.

12. A note reviewing developments in the work of these task forces, and containing elements for initiating the assessment to be undertaken by ACC, is under preparation and will be circulated to OC members before the session.

13. Under this item, the report of the ninth meeting of IACSD, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 20 and 21 February 1997, will also be available. At that meeting, IACSD, inter alia, reviewed preparations for the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development with particular emphasis on issues relating to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly.

14. It will be recalled that, in accordance with the relevant ACC decisions, the last phase of the review of the functioning of IACSD was expected to result in a statement by ACC addressed to the General Assembly at its 1997 special session, which also was to be available in time for the April session (7-25 April 1997) of the Commission on Sustainable Development (which was acting as the preparatory committee for the special session). ACC accordingly requested IACSD to finalize the draft statement at its ninth meeting, and agreed that the draft would thereafter be formally approved by ACC members by correspondence. The draft statement is attached to the report of the ninth meeting of IACSD (ACC/1997/1, annex V).

(ii) United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa

15. Pursuant to the relevant decisions taken by ACC at its second regular session of 1995, the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa was launched in March 1996. At its two regular sessions of 1996, ACC reviewed the progress achieved since the launching of the Special Initiative, and formulated a number of conclusions and recommendations to guide the further implementation of the Special Initiative (ACC/1996/4, paras. 5-22, and ACC/1996/20, paras. 29-31).

16. A note informing ACC of developments since the second regular session of 1996, in the light of the recommendations formulated by ACC at that session, is currently being prepared, and will be available in advance of the session of OC.

(iii) Universal access to basic communications and information services

17. At its first regular session of 1996, ACC launched an inter-agency project on universal access to basic communications and information services, under the

leadership of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). At its second regular session of 1996, ACC was informed of the work being undertaken, and agreed to consider a report on the project at the first regular session of 1997. The report on the project will be available prior to the OC session.

(iv) Graça Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children

18. At the request of the General Assembly, Ms. Graça Machel was appointed to undertake a study on the impact of armed conflict on children. The Assembly, at its fifty-first session, acted on the findings of the study in its resolution 51/77 (II). In view of the importance and inter-agency interest of the subject, it was proposed that ACC consider the matter in 1997, in the light of the outcome of the Assembly's discussion. A note outlining the main recommendations of the study, and the Assembly's action thereon, is currently being prepared and will be made available to OC.

(c) Other matters

(i) Functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery

19. At the second regular session of ACC of 1995, OC was requested to review the programmes of work and scheduling of meetings of inter-agency bodies within the ACC machinery, and to make recommendations for their streamlining. The Committee was further invited to strengthen its capacity to monitor, and report on, the follow-up to ACC decisions within the ACC machinery as well as within individual organizations of the system. It was subsequently concluded that these tasks would best be pursued as part of an overall review of the experience with the 1993 reorganization of the ACC machinery, provided for in the decisions adopted by ACC at that time.

20. At its two regular sessions of 1996, ACC had before it a number of proposals submitted by OC on steps to further reinforce ACC's own functioning, and streamline the working methods and meeting requirements of its subsidiary bodies.

21. In the light of these proposals, ACC adopted a number of measures to enhance its own effectiveness and methods of work, and agreed on a number of considerations to guide the further review of the functioning of its subsidiary machinery. ACC decided to revert to these issues at its first regular session of 1997 with a view to completing the review at its second regular session of 1997.

22. Under this item, OC will need to consider what further recommendations it wishes to address to ACC for its action at the first regular session of 1997, and for completing the review at the second regular session. In the same context, OC will also need to report to ACC on developments regarding the co-location of inter-agency-financed secretariats in Geneva, and to elaborate further suggestions, for consideration by ACC, on the strengthening of networking arrangements among the jointly financed secretariats and concerned units in the United Nations.

(ii) Administrative questions

23. At its second regular session of 1996, ACC had before it, for its consideration, a report on the conclusions reached at the high-level meeting of CCAQ held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 18 and 19 September 1996. OC may wish to inform ACC of the follow-up given to the conclusions reached by ACC on the basis of the report of CCAQ, including on the cost-efficiency and future role of JIU, in the light of information to be provided by the United Nations.

24. Under this item, the attention of ACC will also be drawn to any issues arising from the reports of CCAQ(PER) and CCAQ(FB) requiring ACC's action.

25. In the context of its consideration of this agenda item, it has been the practice of ACC to hear statements from, and to have an exchange of views with, the Chairman of ICSC, and representatives of FICSA and CCISUA.

(iii) Other issues

26. Other issues arising from the OC session, and from the reports of other subsidiary bodies requiring ACC's action or attention, will be identified and brought to the attention of ACC.

27. Arrangements will be made during the OC session for the preparation of a single paper for ACC, which would also serve as the annotated agenda, and incorporate all material requiring ACC's attention and/or action.

4. Relationships between the organizations of the United Nations system and civil society

28. At its first regular session of 1996, OC agreed to include in the agenda of its next session an item on the relationship between the organizations of the United Nations system and civil society, in the light of developments in organizations and ongoing work within the ACC machinery. OC initiated a discussion on the issue at its second regular session of 1996, on the basis of information provided by several members of the Committee. OC invited the representative of ILO to consult with members of the Committee and other interested parties and, on that basis, to take the lead in developing a discussion paper, for review by OC at its first regular session of 1997, that could assist the Committee in initiating preparations for an ACC discussion on the subject, possibly at the second regular session of 1997. It was considered that the main objective of the paper should be to introduce a comprehensive but also well-focused delineation of the concept of civil society, which would assist OC in ensuring that the proposed ACC discussion made a significant contribution to policy development and led to specific policy outcomes, including an assessment by ACC of the implications for the system of present trends, and the identification of desirable future directions for the system as a whole in expanding partnerships with civil society. A discussion paper on the subject will accordingly be before OC.

5. Work of ACC consultative committees and other inter-agency bodies

(a) Work of ACC Consultative Committees

(i) Report of the eighty-sixth session of CCAQ(FB) (document ACC/1997/5), IAEA and UNIDO, Vienna, 10 to 14 February 1997

(ii) Report of the ninth meeting of IACSD (document ACC/1997/1), United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 and 21 February 1997

(iii) Report of CCPOQ on its tenth session (document ACC/1997/7), Palais des Nations, Geneva, 3 to 7 March 1997

(iv) Reports of IACWGE on its first and second sessions (documents ACC/1996/22 and ACC/1997/8), United Nations Headquarters, New York, 22 and 23 October 1996, and 5 and 6 March 1997

(b) Reports of bodies reporting to OC

Report of ISCC on its fourth session (document ACC/1996/18), Palais des Nations, Geneva, 7-9 October 1996

At its last session, "OC expressed appreciation at the progress being made by the Information System Coordination Committee (ISCC) in pursuing the objectives outlined in its terms of reference, and agreed to continue its review of the work of ISCC in the context of the ongoing overall review of the functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery" (ACC/1996/2, para. 35).

6. Other matters

Future sessions of OC and ACC

29. OC will need to make recommendations on ACC's work programme, and decide on its own programme, for the second regular session in 1997.

Notes

* See the letter of 23 May 1996 of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General, to executive heads. The relevant paragraph of the letter read as follows: "As a new, main theme for the session, I would propose that we consider ways of enhancing inter-agency coordination in situations where a peacemaking or peacekeeping effort is to proceed in parallel with efforts to move forward from emergency relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and the resumption of economic and social development. I have in mind, in particular, the support required by countries in special situations, usually arising from long-standing internal conflict, where the system is called upon to undertake a range of functions that extend beyond the scope of the standing arrangements for coordination of the system's operational activities for development and its humanitarian activities. Without establishing any new machinery, and bearing in mind that the main focus of coordination should remain at the country level, we need to strengthen the overall capacity of the system for early warning and for

assessing and exchanging information when a complex emergency situation appears to be imminent. We also need to enhance procedures for consultation and cooperation, particularly when a complex settlement of an internal conflict is being negotiated, to ensure that initiatives and contributions from various parts of the system are mutually supportive and conducive to an effective peace-building process. Any such procedures should be geared to maximizing support for closer inter-agency coordination and cooperation at the country level."

/...

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

(Part I, Geneva, 20 to 22 and 24 March 1997)

Chairman: P. CIVILI (United Nations)

Secretary: C. HACKETT (United Nations)

United Nations entities and programmes

United Nations	
Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development	S. Khan
Office of Human Resources Management	J. Beagle
Department of Humanitarian Affairs	D. Saidy
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements	L. Ludvigsen
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	J. Burley M. Plehn-Mejia
United Nations Environment Programme	A. Z. Amin
United Nations Children's Fund	A. Vaher B. O. Bassani
United Nations Development Programme	G. Gabriel N. Chandavakar D. Touré
United Nations Population Fund	M. Simonen
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	S. Berglund
United Nations International Drug Control Programme	G. Day
World Food Programme	W. H. Schleiffer

Specialized agencies, IAEA and WTO

International Labour Organization	G. Minet
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	W. Mann

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	L. Schaudinn M. Landry
International Civil Aviation Organization	G. Griffiths
World Health Organization	Y. Kawaguchi Maaza Bekele
World Bank	E. Pachter
International Monetary Fund	J. B. Zulu
Universal Postal Union	K. Samawi G. Kalicki
International Telecommunication Union	K. Boussaïd V. Paratian
World Meteorological Organization	S. Chacowry
International Maritime Organization	F. Labastida
World Intellectual Property Organization	K. J. Suedi
International Fund for Agricultural Development	U. Abhyankar
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	G. Papuli
* * *	
International Atomic Energy Agency	S. K. Sharma
* * *	
World Trade Organization	P. Pedersen
* * *	
Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions)	R. Eggleston
Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions)	P. Leslie
Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions	D. Deane
* * *	
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	R. Chahil-Graf

Annex III

MODEL POLICY STATEMENT ON PUBLISHING AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION IN AN ELECTRONIC AGE*

INTRODUCTION

This model policy statement consists initially of two parts.

Section I, which covers issues of a general nature, sets out guidelines that can be expected to stand the test of time for some years to come. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of information and its dissemination in a contemporary environment characterized by the growing use of information technology. However, section I is not intended to focus on any particular technology since it is recognized that rapid change in this area is a fact of life.

Subsequent sections will deal with issues of relevance to particular technologies. They will be designed to be used as long as appropriate, and to be discarded or rewritten as technological change is introduced.

Section II (the first of these additional sections) covers Internet publishing issues posed by the growing use of the World Wide Web.

As the policy evolves, it will be extended to cover:

(a) All means and media, including electronic display, printed documents and publications, audio recordings, videotapes and data transmission;

(b) All repositories of information, examples of which are public and press information, electronic databases, library services, statistical information, documents and publications.

The purpose of the model is not only to provide a harmonized view of what policies are appropriate for United Nations organizations but also to enable individual agencies to adopt the policy or adapt it to their own needs. Some agencies may choose to issue such a policy statement as an administrative instruction or staff notice. Others may wish to use it to prepare a working paper for their governing body or for a steering committee within their agency administration. It is intended that this decision be left to each agency.

In due course, additional sections can also be prepared in order to include older technologies, either as part of the model policy or to meet the specific requirements of individual organizations. In this way, the policy will provide comprehensive coverage of the main aspects of information access and dissemination.

For example, an existing (or newly developed) general policy on the provision of material on CD-ROM could be added as a separate section.

As the model policy now stands, it is designed to serve as one building block of current relevance to an overall policy.

I. GENERAL ISSUES

1. The importance of information access

1.1 It is generally agreed that information resources are among the organization's most valuable assets and deserve careful management.

1.2 For many years, electronic technology has been used in the production of information. Since 1990, however, the growing importance of on-line electronic access to information, in accordance with the express wishes of member States, has been recognized.

1.3 The organization intends to make information available electronically and on-line on demand, using contemporary technology. That technology is expected to evolve and to change for the foreseeable future.

1.4 In some cases, material will need to be offered in both electronic and printed form. Other cases may require that only printed or electronic versions be offered. Where there is a statutory requirement to provide printed material, the governing body can be asked to agree to its replacement by electronic alternatives. Thus, a statutory requirement need not in itself be a hindrance to the transition to electronic media. What is more important is the current capability and preference of the target audience with regard to accessing information.

2. Aim of information dissemination policy

2.1 The aim of information dissemination policy is to facilitate the dissemination of an appropriate selection of material, by conventional or electronic means, based on the needs of the organization's target audience. It must be borne in mind that printed publications will continue to exist. However, in many cases, electronic versions are an attractive alternative to what have traditionally been printed documents. There will be a changing mix of electronic and printed matter during the forthcoming decades.

3. Information clients

3.1 In today's environment, information clients can be expected to include: officials of [member/contracting] States; the organization's governing [body/bodies]; staff of [missions/delegations]; other international organizations, including field projects related to technical cooperation; non-governmental organizations; the press and other media; academic institutions and libraries; business and industry, including financial institutions; independent institutions, including regional bodies; self-employed professionals, such as freelance translators; and the general public.

3.2 All of the above are among the organization's clients, with the exception of [list exceptions here or delete the last phrase in this sentence].

4. Classification of information

4.1 Information, regardless of the form in which it is stored (on paper and/or electronic media) or how it is disseminated, can be categorized as follows:

(a) PUBLIC, i.e., information that is available to all information clients with open access to encourage use;

(b) LIMITED but unsecured, i.e., information that is normally not of a sensitive nature but is of primary interest to a select number of individuals;

(c) RESTRICTED with secured access, i.e., information that is sensitive but nevertheless needs to be disseminated to authorized recipients.

4.2 A fourth category of information, CONFIDENTIAL, is not within the purview of this policy statement.

5. Responsibilities of information providers

5.1 Information providers within the organization can be characterized in different ways. Some are the authors of information. Others collect information, generally from [member/contracting] States, and publish it in an enhanced form. Still others compile and edit information from various sources.

5.2 The primary responsibility for making material available electronically lies with these information providers. In performing this function, they should conform with recommended (best) practices issued by the organization.

6. Editorial quality control

6.1 There are a number of advantages introduced by the editing of information for publication:

(a) Ensuring the accuracy of presentation of texts;

(b) Providing a consistent style and organizational image;

(c) Introducing language correction, particularly when authors are not writing in their native tongue;

(d) Raising the quality of contributions from compilers who have limited experience in presenting the results of their work in an accepted format;

(e) Maintaining international acceptability by, for example, avoiding discriminatory or offensive content;

(f) Ensuring that texts are understandable by readers whose first language is not the language of publication;

(g) Ensuring that texts are written, where warranted, at a level of complexity suited to those who are not specialists in the particular subject;

(h) Checking that publications effectively convey the message intended.

6.2 The above advantages apply equally to both traditional and electronic publications. Except in life-threatening emergencies, care should be taken not to bypass the editorial function in the endeavour to disseminate information rapidly.

7. Questions of intellectual property

7.1 In the sphere of information, issues related to intellectual property are of paramount importance.

7.2 The organization retains the copyright to all its published material. Specifically, the organization also retains the copyright to all information made available electronically, whether or not printed versions also exist.

7.3 Material should only be published by or at the request of the authorizing/originating office, i.e., the information provider.

7.4 Care should be taken not to duplicate extensively information that is already available in the same medium. In the case of electronic material, the use of hyperlinks makes duplication unnecessary.

7.5 If information becomes obsolete in the sense that it is no longer current or useful, it must be promptly removed from the production chain but should always be preserved in the archives of the organization.

7.6 Informal and unofficial material should not normally be published on-line; if it is, its unofficial status should be clearly indicated.

8. Confidential information

8.1 The policies set out in this statement do not apply to information that the organization deems to be confidential and/or relevant solely to the internal administration of the secretariat.

II. WORLD WIDE WEB PUBLISHING

1. Use of the World Wide Web

1.1 Internet users will increasingly expect the organization to provide information on the World Wide Web and other modern networking technologies as they appear. While electronic editions of certain material will become available, printed publications will continue to exist in line with demand. In addition, CD-ROM-based products have a client base that may not have or desire access to the Web.

1.2 The organization intends to make electronic material available on the Web to take advantage of the low-cost opportunities now open to it through the use of this Internet service, particularly in an international environment in which conventional distribution expenses are substantial. Until alternative technologies appear that warrant a change of approach, the Web will be the primary but not sole means by which a large volume of information will be made available on demand and on-line.

2. Web publishing

2.1 Many departments and offices in organizations of the United Nations system have started the process of Web publishing.

2.2 Staff involved in this activity need to be aware of the necessity, as with printed material, to maintain a high quality with regard to completeness and authenticity; consistency with and relevance to the approved work programme of the organization; timeliness, which should improve; coherence; clarity of presentation; and readability. In addition, staff must bear in mind ease of use by the organization's information clients and the need to select alternative media in cases in which Web dissemination is not the most appropriate choice.

2.3 With respect to Web publishing, a commitment must be made by a responsible manager who should be:

(a) Familiar with the technical capabilities of the Web;

(b) Responsive to user requirements and priorities for access in a prompt and efficient manner;

(c) Able to arrange training to enable staff to make the transition to the electronic environment.

However, primary responsibility for making documents available electronically will lie with information providers, working in conformity with recommended (best) practices.

2.4 Among best practices, the following are expected to be of initial importance:

(a) Avoiding trivial material by publishing only information with substance;

(b) Ensuring consistency with the (printed) publications strategy and practice of the organization.

2.5 Accordingly, [name of the office/division responsible within the secretariat] will be responsible for issuing specific instructions and promulgating recommended (best) practices in order to avoid confusion as the organization moves to an increasingly electronic environment, in particular by making information available on the Web. [Name of staff member and/or title of post] has been assigned to [supervise/coordinate] this undertaking on a [full-time/part-time] basis. [His/her] role will include actively seeking the

concurrence of originators so that accurate and timely material can be accessed and disseminated electronically via the Web.

2.6 In addition, [title of post] will be responsible for editing electronic material to ensure consistency with the organization's objectives and house style. The design of documents for the Web includes linkages to other documents, and thus differs from the design of conventional printed text. Such inherent design differences need to be taken into account and exploited to their best advantage.

3. Location of Web site

3.1 As is the case for the United Nations system in general, there are three options for the physical location of the organization's Web site. The computer facilities on its own premises or at other United Nations organizations can be used. The International Computing Centre is also available to house Web sites for any United Nations agency. Finally, today's market place has given rise to a number of commercial centres.

3.2 It has been determined that the organization's Web site will be located at [enter details of the agency's choice of location].

3.3 As a result of the new technical features offered by the Web, the organization will also serve as a gateway to all other United Nations agencies by including a prominent reference to the official Web site locator for the United Nations system (http://www.unsystem.org) on its own home page (main universal resource locator).

4. Web-related issues

4.1 Where authoritative on-line information exists in another agency and that agency has ensured its accuracy, the organization will not duplicate such information but will provide on-line access through hyperlinks for clients.

4.2 It is recognized that for various reasons, many individuals in developing States will not have access to the necessary technical infrastructure to use the electronic network. However, agencies responsible for technical cooperation in sustainable development [including the organization] are approaching this challenge. The situation is expected to improve progressively through such efforts as the Global Information Infrastructure initiative.

4.3 Whereas the active dissemination of printed material has required targeted mailings to individuals or institutions, dissemination through the Web will take the form of an on-line response to user queries. Where appropriate, a system will be installed to sign documents digitally so that users can verify their source and authenticity. Administrative procedures will be established, where needed, for affixing digital signatures.

4.4 The organization will initially give priority to making electronic information publicly available free of charge but will also reserve the right to provide information products for a fee via the Web.

4.5 The Web site will include an agreed copyright statement displayed prominently on all material in order to protect the organization's interests. In appropriate cases, the organization may grant permission for certain uses to specific clients or classes of clients, for example, to permit the reproduction of copyrighted material for educational purposes on a non-commercial basis or to enable on-line information to be displayed for private viewing.

5. Timing of Web implementation

5.1 It is expected that at least [enter number] years will be needed for substantially all existing material for which there is an electronic demand to be available via the Web. Once that point is reached, the continuing requirement will be to add fresh material and weed material no longer of use.

5.2 Initially, one priority in the use of the Web will be to publish dynamic (constantly changing) information that needs to be made available rapidly.

Notes

[a] Developed by the ISCC Task Force on Information Access and Dissemination for endorsement by ACC (to be adapted and adopted by ISCC member agencies).

[b] Adapted from those listed in a paper entitled "Maintaining editorial quality control in an electronic environment" (IAMLADP/1996/R.4), submitted by the International Atomic Energy Agency at the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, Geneva, 24-27 June 1996.

Annex IV

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

(Part II, Geneva, 14 April 1997)

Chairperson: L. SCHAUDINN (UNESCO)

Secretary: C. HACKETT (United Nations)

United Nations entities and programmes

United Nations	
Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development	S. Khan
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	M. Plehn-Majia
United Nations Children's Fund	A. Vaher
United Nations Development Programme	G. Gabriel N. Chandavakar
United Nations Population Fund	M. Simonen
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	S. Berglund
United Nations International Drug Control Programme	G. Day
World Food Programme	W. H. Schleiffer

Specialized agencies, IAEA and WTO

International Labour Organization	G. Minet
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	W. Mann
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	L. Schaudinn
International Civil Aviation Organization	G. Griffiths
World Health Organization	Maaza Bekele
World Bank	A. Sfeir-Younis

Universal Postal Union	G. Kalicki
International Telecommunication Union	K. Boussaïd
World Meteorological Organization	T. Sutherland
International Maritime Organization	F. Labastida
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	G. Papuli

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Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions)	P. Leslie
Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions	D. Deane

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